

IN THE CLAIMS:

1-8. (Cancelled).

9. (Currently Amended) Method for non-destructive stretching and fastening of a pelt on a pelt board using a stretching machine comprising holding means for engaging a lower end of a pelt board, and gripping elements for fastening of the lower end of a pelt drawn loosely over said pelt board during the stretching of said pelt on the pelt board, the gripping elements comprising inner parts and outer parts which are engageable with the pelt by the introduction of the inner parts between a surface of the pelt board and a leather side of the pelt, and the outer parts opposite the inner parts being displaceable towards a fur side of the pelt for the fastening of the pelt between the inner parts and the outer parts, comprising the steps of:

engaging and fastening the pelt between the inner and outer parts of the gripping elements ~~with the pelt~~ so as to retain a lower edge area of the pelt in a fixed position relative to the gripping elements substantially along the whole periphery of the pelt,

stretching the pelt by effecting a relative displacement between the gripping elements and the holding means,

fastening of the pelt in the stretched position on the pelt board by drawing of a fixing bag over the outside of the fur side of the pelt so as to bring at least part of a lower end of the bag into tight contact with the fur side of the pelt,

followed by releasing of the gripping elements from the pelt and releasing of the holding means.

10. (Previously Presented) Method according to claim 9, wherein a vibratory movement is imparted to at least one of said holding means and the gripping elements during the relative displacement between the holding means and the gripping elements, said relative displacement being oriented substantially in a longitudinal direction of the pelt board.

11. (Currently Amended) Stretching machine for non-destructive stretching and fastening of a pelt on a pelt board, comprising holding means for the pelt board, gripping elements for fastening of the lower end of a pelt drawn loosely over the pelt board, and means for effecting a relative displacement between the pelt board and the gripping elements, and where the gripping elements comprise at least two inner parts which are led between the surface of the pelt board and the leather side of the pelt from the lower end of the board, and cooperating with the inner parts, at least two outer parts with subtending sides which connect with guiding and pressure means for displacement of the outer parts between a closed position, in which the outer parts are pressed into contact with the fur side of the pelt for the fastening of the lower end of the pelt in a fixed position between the inner and outer parts of the gripping elements, and an open position in which the pelt is free, wherein sides of the inner parts and the outer parts, respectively, facing towards the pelt board are configured to match the shape of the pelt board, so that the gripping elements engage with the lower end of the pelt substantially along the whole of the outside periphery of the pelt board.

12. (Previously Presented) Stretching machine according to claim 11, wherein a vibrator unit is provided on at least one of the holding means and the gripping elements, the vibration amplitude of which is oriented substantially in the longitudinal direction of the pelt board.

13. (Previously Presented) Stretching machine according to claim 11, wherein the inner parts comprise an upper counter-hold flange, the edge of which on a side facing away from the pelt board comprises a track, and wherein sides of the outer parts facing towards the upper edge comprise a pressure flange which cooperates with the track and has an edge with a shape which corresponds to the shape of the track.

14. (Previously Presented) Stretching machine according to claim 11, wherein the inner parts of the gripping elements comprise two open, similarly-shaped but laterally reversed half parts which are displaceable towards each other, and which are housed on the respective brackets which are disposed opposite each other via a pivot connection, said

brackets being displaceable by actuators towards and away from each other between a closed position in which subtending sides of the inner parts substantially in contact with each other, and an open position in which the inner parts lie at a distance from each other, and wherein the outer parts are located on pivotally mounted arms for the respective brackets, said arms being displaceable by actuators between a position in which the flange edges are pressed in against the tracks in the upper edge of the inner parts, and a position in which said flange edges lie at a distance from said tracks.

15. (Previously Presented) Stretching machine according to claim 11, wherein subtending sides of the inner parts extend in a concave manner.

16. (Previously Presented) Stretching machine according claim 11, wherein counter-hold flanges stand up from a planar part which is oriented in a substantially transverse manner in relation to the counter-hold flanges.